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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN SUDAN: A TENSE CALM RETURNS TO JONGLEI,
UPPER NILE

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Classified By: CGJ RWhitehead for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Two security hotspots in Jonglei and Upper Nile have calmed, according to UNMIS security officers. Fighting between the SPLA and the Lou Nuer militia known as the White Army has abated, and GoSS-approved disarmament continues. In Fangak, a power struggle between the local SPLM Commissioner favored by the Governor of Jonglei State and his rival, who has ties to the Government in Khartoum, has concluded with the latter the winner. Tensions remain in both areas, but for now, at least, a tense calm prevails. End Summary.

SPLA vs. White Army

¶2. (SBU) The UNMIS Sector I Security Chief briefed CG on an improving security situation in northern Jonglei and the Upper Nile. Fighting between an estimated 9,000 SPLA troops and the 20,000 strong Lou Nuer militia, known as the White Army, has ceased. UNMIS missions launched from Malakal in Sector III on May 27 and 28 confirmed that the SPLA is in control of the areas surrounding Waat, Ayod, Walgah, Pieri and Yuai, formerly the scene of fighting between the SPLA and White Army forces. There are accusations that the SPLA torched villages during the fighting.

¶3. (SBU) Initial reports that Jonglei Governor Philip Thon Leek ordered the forced disarmament of migrating Lou Nuer, which sparked the conflict, were not correct, according to UNMIS. SPLA Generals George Athor and Peter Bol Kong confirmed that they had acted under orders from the GoSS in Juba, a claim that has been corroborated. The disarmament continues, with large numbers of White Army fighters surrendering (one of) their weapons. UNMIS says that the heavy nature of some of the weaponry) machineguns and rocket launchers) belies White Army claims that they were a lightly armed militia and did not belong in the category of other armed groups (OAGs).

¶4. (SBU) While tense but peaceful armament moves apace, the biggest challenge is a remnant SSDF force based near Yuai. Loyal to Gen. Simon Gatwick, now in Juba with the SPLA, this group claims to be SPLA but has never been integrated into SPLA structures. Due to historical affinities with the White Army, this force opposes the disarmament program. The major UNMIS concern is the consequences of an overly aggressive SPLA disarmament campaign, which would risk the Lou Nuer making common cause with other remnant OAGs in the region, notably Ismael Konyi,s Murle militia in Pibor and Thomas Mabor,s forces in Pulturk and Dolleib Hill.

A Fangak Reconciliation

15. (SBU) A reconciliation conference in Fangak that ended on May 24 resolved the struggle between Gabriel Tan Ginye and John Malwit as to who would emerge as the choice of the Fangak people. Malwit, who was named by the Governor of Jonglei, refused to participate in the conference, which selected Tan Ginye as the people's choice. Speakers nonetheless made it clear that Tan Ginye's former alliance with the Northern Government and the SAF were unacceptable, and that he needed to publicly switch to the GoSS/SPLA. Tan Ginye said he would consult with his forces before deciding. Mediator John Kong has offered Tan Ginye safe passage to Juba to discuss his plans with the GoSS. Governor Thon Leek has rejected the defeat of his candidate and said that he would refer the issue to Juba. For now, peace holds in Fangak.

Elsewhere

16. (SBU) Another UNMIS assessment mission to Nasr revealed that tensions there have subsided, permitting UNMIS to lower the security level from IV to II. Mading remains at Level IV, but reports from the ground indicate that conditions are such that an assessment mission is possible there to ascertain if the security level should be lowered. UNMIS reported no activity by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Sector I save for a group of presumed armed LRA fighters entering the village of Gangura, near Yambio. Villagers who fled at the approach returned to find that their houses were not looted) only some foodstuffs were taken) and that no

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locals were abducted. UNMIS concluded that this force entered Sudan from the Garamba Park in Congo, probably driven by hunger.

Conclusion

17. (SBU) There have been some disagreement within the UN over conflict between the White Army and SPLA. The Civic Action Office criticized the SPLA for the violence spawned by its attempts at forced disarmament and for human rights violations, and charged that UNMIS should have intervened with the GoSS early on to halt all involuntary disarmament. UNMIS countered that it had not gone soft on the GoSS, which could not be expected to stand by while 20,000 armed Lou Nuer forced their way into the territory of other groups, setting the stage for even broader confrontation. There is also controversy within SPLM circles, with some arguing that the disarmament campaign was overly robust and targeted the Nuer at the expense of other ethnic groups.
STEINFELD